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General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
2nd meeting
held on
Friday, 9 October 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the members of the Committee to elect two Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur, in accordance with rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

2. Mr. WEOSOWICZ (Poland) nominated Mr. Fuentes Ibáñez (Bolivia) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

3. Mr. SCHAEFER (Germany) nominated Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

4. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in the absence of other nominations, the Committee should not proceed to a secret vote.

5. Mr. Fuentes Ibáñez (Bolivia) and Mr. Alsaidi (Yemen) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.

6. Mr. ABDERAHMAN (Egypt) nominated Mr. Shevchenko (Ukraine) for the office of Rapporteur.

7. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, in the absence of other nominations, the Committee should not proceed to a secret vote.

8. Mr. Shevchenko (Ukraine) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/SPC/47/1 and A/SPC/47/L.1)

9. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the recommendations concerning the organization and rationalization of work contained in the report of the General Committee to the General Assembly (A/47/250).

10. In connection with the recommendations of the General Committee, he pointed out that, according to the information provided by the Secretariat, during the previous session the Special Political Committee had lost almost 39 hours, in other words the equivalent of 13 meetings, as a result of the late starting or early adjournment of meetings. As for the meetings themselves, any extension of more than 30 minutes beyond the normal time of adjournment should be requested 24 hours before the meeting. If additional meetings were required, they would probably have to be held on Saturdays.

11. In accordance with the recommendation in annex V of the rules of procedure, he intended to close the list of speakers on each agenda item when one third of the meetings allocated to that item had been held. Committee members who wished to make statements must place their names on the list kept by the Secretariat and would be called upon to speak in that order. Once the

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list had been closed, any changes in the order could be made only by mutual consent between two delegations which agreed to exchange places on the list. Otherwise, any representative not ready to speak when his turn came would be placed at the end of the list.

12. In accordance with the Committee's practice and the recommendation approved by the General Assembly, representatives wishing to exercise the right of reply should so inform the Secretariat, which would keep a list of replies to be heard by the Committee once all delegations on the list of speakers for a particular meeting had been heard. If the same item was discussed at two meetings held on the same day, delegations would exercise their right of reply at the end of the second meeting. The General Assembly had decided to limit to two the number of statements by any delegation in exercise of the right of reply, the first to be limited to 10 minutes and the second to 5 minutes.

13. In order to facilitate the work of the interpreters and précis-writers, speakers should provide the conference officer with 15 copies of their prepared statements and 300 copies if they were also to be distributed to delegations, specialized agencies, observers and other parties concerned.

14. The General Assembly had drawn attention to regulation 4.9 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, which stipulated: "No Council, Commission or other competent body shall take a decision involving either a change in the programme budget approved by the General Assembly or the possible requirement of expenditure unless it has received and taken account of a report from the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of the proposal." In that connection, the Assembly had noted that it was imperative that Main Committees should allow sufficient time for the preparation of the estimate of expenditures by the Secretariat and for its consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee. The General Assembly had imposed a deadline of 1 December for the submission to the Fifth Committee of all draft resolutions with financial implications, and a deadline of 18 November in the case of the Main Committees. The Assembly had also felt it necessary to establish a minimum period of 48 hours between the submission of and the voting on any proposal involving financial expenditure in order to allow the Secretary-General to prepare and present the related statement of administrative and financial implications. In that connection, reference was made to the observations of the Secretary-General regarding the fact that it might take a few days for the preparation and presentation of such statements, depending on the type and complexity of the proposals involving changes in the work programme and additional expenditures. In addition, ACABQ and the Fifth Committee needed adequate time to review the programme budget implications of a draft resolution before the latter was acted on by the Assembly. The Secretary-General considered it desirable that Member States should submit proposals involving statements of programme budget implications sufficiently in advance to avoid the cancellation of meetings or the postponement of consideration of items.

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15. With regard to the very expensive item of documentation, the General Assembly had observed that stricter measures must be taken to limit as much as possible requests by Member States and subsidiary organs for the distribution of material as official documents of the General Assembly. Moreover, owing to financial constraints, overnight processing of documents was not always possible, a fact which should be taken into account when draft resolutions were submitted.

16. As in the past, the Special Political Committee would have summary records. The procedure for submitting corrections to those records was set out in the footnote thereto. Once again, the General Assembly had accepted the recommendation of the General Committee that the Special Political Committee should be authorized to receive, on specific request, transcripts of the debates of some of its meetings or portions thereof. Those transcripts, which were not part of the official records of the Committee, would not entail any extrabudgetary expenditure, as they would be prepared when the required services became available. In fact, they appeared after the summary records. In view of the financial crisis, he suggested that the summary records should be distributed in the language in which they had originally been prepared - namely English, French or Spanish - as soon as they were available, on the understanding that they would be issued in the other languages as soon as the translations were available.

17. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt his suggestion, which was designed to expedite its work.

18. It was so decided.

19. The CHAIRMAN invited delegations to submit to the Secretariat the names of their representatives so that a list of members of the Committee could be issued (to be issued as document A/INF/47/3).

20. He drew the attention of members of the Committee to document A/SPC/47/1, containing a letter addressed to him by the President of the General Assembly transmitting a list of the agenda items allocated to the Committee and other decisions relating to the programme of work. He also drew attention to document A/SPC/47/L.1, containing a tentative timetable for the work of the Committee. The schedule would have to be interpreted with the necessary degree of flexibility in order to coordinate the Committee's work with that of the General Assembly and other bodies. The Committee would, in particular, continue the close coordination with the Fourth Committee which, during the previous five sessions, had enabled it to avoid as far as possible the holding of concurrent meetings. Such coordination would be effected with the necessary flexibility to allow both Committees to complete their work on schedule.

21. In the preparation of the Committee's programme of work, account had been taken of the documents available and the dates envisaged for issuing the

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remaining basic documents. For the consideration of item 71 (Effects of atomic radiation), the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation had been issued as document A/47/293. With regard to item 77 (Question of the composition of the relevant organs of the United Nations), no basic document had been envisaged. Under item 72 (International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space), the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space would be issued as document A/47/20, and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had been issued as document A/47/383. Under item 73 (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) the Committee would have before it the report of the Commissioner-General (A/47/13) and the report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (A/47/413). The Secretary-General's report under General Assembly resolution 46/46 H had been issued as document A/47/438. The remainder of the documents on that item would be issued before the Committee took it up. They were: the Secretary-General's reports under General Assembly resolutions 46/46 D, E, F, G, I, J and K and the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA. Concerning item 74 (Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories), the Special Committee's first and second periodic reports pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/47 A had been issued as documents A/47/76 and A/47/262 respectively. The third periodic report would be issued in due course. It was hoped that the Secretary-General's reports under General Assembly resolutions 46/47 B, C, D, E, F and G would be issued before the Committee took up the item. As to item 76 (Questions relating to information), the report of the Committee on Information had been issued as document A/47/21. The Secretary-General's report pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/73 B (A/47/462) would be issued before the Committee took up the item. With regard to item 75 (Comprehensive review of the whole question of peace-keeping operations in all their aspects), the report of the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations had already been issued as document A/47/253. The special report of that Committee was contained in document A/47/386.

Adoption of the proposed timetable

22. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the preparation of the proposed timetable (A/SPC/47/L.1), account had been taken of the availability of documents, the consideration of related items in other bodies and the number of meetings devoted to those items at previous sessions.

23. Mr. BATAINEH (Jordan), supported by Mr. AL-SUWAIDI (United Arab Emirates) and Mr. JELBAN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), said his delegation considered that discussion of items 73, on UNRWA, and 74, on the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, should be strictly limited so that delegations could speak specifically on Israeli

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practices. However, the chronic problem of delay in issuing the most recent report on Israeli practices would prevent delegations from considering item 74 adequately. The item should therefore be deferred until the Committee had before it all the necessary information. He suggested that item 74 should be interchanged with item 75 or, if that was not possible, it should be deferred until the end of the programme of work.

24. The CHAIRMAN suggested that in the light of the views expressed, the Committee should postpone until the next meeting its decision on the programme of work. In the meantime, he would consult with the other members of the Bureau in order to submit revised proposals. He suggested also that the Committee should take a final decision at its next meeting concerning the postponement of certain items, following consultations with the Secretariat and the representatives of the organizations that were due to appear before the Committee. He took it that the Committee agreed with his suggestion.

25. It was so decided.

Hearings on apartheid

26. Mrs. PILOTO (Zimbabwe), referring to item 33 (Policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa), requested a clarification concerning arrangements for the statements on that item to be made in the Committee by individuals and organizations.

27. The CHAIRMAN said that the Assembly had decided to consider that item directly in plenary meeting and that organizations and individuals having a special interest in the question would be permitted to be heard by the Special Political Committee. He announced that the Committee would devote two meetings on 6 November to those hearings and suggested that the organizations and individuals wishing to be heard by the Committee should submit their requests in writing to the Chairman of the Committee by Thursday, 22 October at the latest. The communications in which hearings were requested would be distributed as Committee documents and would be considered at a subsequent meeting, before the hearings were held. The Secretariat would inform the organizations and individuals that were granted a hearing of the date on which the relevant meeting would be held. He took it that the Committee agreed with that procedure.

28. It was so decided.

Working Group on questions relating to information

29. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, with a view to expediting its work, the Committee should, as in previous years, establish an open-ended working group, presided over by one of the two Vice-Chairmen of the Committee, to prepare the

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draft resolution on item 76 (Questions relating to information). He took it that the Committee agreed.

30. It was so decided.

Working Group on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

31. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, as in previous years, the Committee should establish an open-ended working group, presided over by the representative of Austria, to prepare the draft resolution on item 72 (International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space). He took it that the Committee agreed.

32. It was so decided.

33. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee was scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, 20 October 1992 at 10 a.m., when it would decide on the timetable and would take up items 70 (Science and peace) and 71 (Effects of atomic radiation). He requested that delegations which were preparing draft resolutions on those items should submit them to the Secretariat before that date and that members wishing to speak on those items should include their names in the list of speakers, which would be closed at the end of the next meeting.

The meeting rose at noon.